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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 LAGOS 000269

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: ELECTION 2007: THE OUTLOOK FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL
AND GUBERNATORIAL RACES IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

REF: LAGOS 22

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B and D)

11. (C) Summary: For the current elections, Southern Nigeria appears to follow the dictum that all politics are local. Greater attention will focus on the state gubernatorial races than on the presidential race. Few people expect a credible exercise. Most expect the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to be the beneficiary of large-scale electoral misconduct. Still, some gubernatorial races will be hotly contested in areas where an opposition party is strong. Violence is a distinct possibility in these areas. With regard to the presidential election, most people expect the PDP's Umaru Yar'Adua to win the South. Large-scale vote manipulation for the presidential race will not provoke as strong a reaction as in some of the gubernatorial races. Why? Few southerners would be willing to risk life or limb to object to an electoral result no matter how tainted where the only major candidates involved are northerners. End summary.

Elections in the South Unlikely to Be Free or Fair

12. (C) The electoral picture in the South makes it unlikely the election will be free or fair. The police and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) have helped

stymie opposition activities. The police have selectively arrested and prosecuted opposition party members. INEC has selectively disqualified many strong opposition candidates in key races throughout the South. The People's Democratic Party (PDP), with sitting governors in 14 of the 17 states, has used virtually all aspects of the power of incumbency to influence the electoral process.

Violence Could Erupt in the Gubernatorial
Races, but not the Presidential Election

¶3. (C) Although the presidential election will likely be rigged, the South is unlikely to erupt into violence. The three major candidates are northerners and Muslim, and the South is unlikely to protest violently on behalf of a Buhari or an Atiku. However, it is likely violence will occur as a result of bitterly contested gubernatorial elections. The pre-election violence which has already occurred has been the result of hotly-contested local races, not the presidential one.

¶4. (C) Key gubernatorial races to watch will be:

Southwest: Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, and Ekiti
Southeast: Abia, Anambra, and Imo
South-South: Delta and Edo

All other southern states appear to be fairly solid in the PDP's win column.

Lagos Gubernatorial Race: AC's Fashola Favored

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¶5. (C) The gubernatorial election in Lagos has numerous entries, but the two main candidates are Action Congress (AC) candidate Babatunde Fashola and PDP candidate Musiliu Obanikoro. In Lagos, the power of incumbency and a strong grassroots party structure favor the AC. The current Governor Bola Tinubu's Chief of Staff, Fashola is the favorite, but the determination of the PDP to win Lagos has made the race a bitter one. Violence between the PDP and AC partisans has been frequent and is expected to occur on election day and extend beyond. Besides these two candidates, there are twenty-one other contenders, but only two, Democratic People's Alliance's (DPA) Jimi Agbaje, and Labour Party's (LP) Femi Pedro, the present Lagos Deputy Governor, could be considered potentially serious darkhorses.

SW Oyo Gubernatorial Race: Akala Will Use the PDP Machine

¶6. (C) The gubernatorial election in Oyo State features PDP candidate Deputy Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala against AC candidate Taoheed Adedaja, a professor and former Chairman of State University Education Board under Akala. The unpopular Akala is likely to win because the PDP machinery is geared for electoral prestidigitation and also violence. Adedaja switched to the AC in 2006 and won the nomination. Adedaja seeks to benefit from Akala's unpopularity following allegations of corruption and abuse of office during his 11-month tenure as Governor.

SW Ekiti Gubernatorial Race: PDP
Favored in a Tight Election

¶7. (C) Before the gubernatorial primaries, the PDP appeared to be in the lead to win the gubernatorial election.

However, the PDP split when the National PDP maneuvered Olusegun Oni, the third place finisher in the primary, to be the candidate. PDP's decision to overlook the top two finishers, Yinka Akerele and Bunmi Oni, divided the party. Akerele, a close associate of former Governor Ayo Fayose, joined the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), while Bunmi switched to the AC. Akerele's candidacy is suspected to have the backing of the former governor. These developments have reduced the PDP's chances. AC candidate Kayode Fayemi stands to benefit the most from the PDP's fragmentation. However, the PDP still controls the election machinery in Ekiti, as Special Administrator, General Tunji Olurin, is a member of the PDP and a protege of President Obasanjo.

SW Ondo Gubernatorial Race: PDP's Agagu Favored

18. (C) The race between taciturn incumbent PDP Governor Olusegun Agagu and popular former Minister of Housing Olusegun Mimiko, now the Labour Party (LP) candidate, will be close. Both candidates have grassroots support. Mimiko, who has been in three parties in the past five years, left the PDP because he was angered by Governor Agagu's supposed breach of a 2002 understanding between the two to give Mimiko the PDP gubernatorial ticket come 2007. Several opposition

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parties have joined a coalition with Mimiko.

SE Abia Gubernatorial Race: Tight Election

19. (C) Abia has one of the Southeast's closest gubernatorial races. The main candidates are Theodore Orji of the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA), Onyema Ugochukwu of the PDP, Uzodinma Okpara of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), and Ikechi Emenike of the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP). The election in Abia boils down to a proxy struggle pitting PDP break-away Governor Orji Kalu against the PDP national power structure. Upon leaving the PDP, Kalu largely transferred the PDP machinery in the state to the PPA. However, his personal popularity in the state has suffered as a result of his perceived spotty performance as governor. Kalu and his candidate Orji also have been distracted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) investigation. The PDP's Ugochukwu, former chairman of the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC), is lackluster but he has the backing of President Obasanjo who would like nothing better than to embarrass Kalu and strip him of political power and influence. APGA's Okpara, son of a late venerated Igbo leader, is a distant darkhorse in the State.

SE Imo Gubernatorial Race: PDP Infighting
Leaves the Party Without a Candidate

110. (C) The disputed primary result came from the party's decision to give Charles Ugwu the governorship ticket over Senator Ifeanyi Araraume, who was declared the winner after the primaries. However, Araraume won his case in the Supreme Court to be the PDP's representative. Governor Achike Udenwa is diametrically opposed to Araraume. Recently the national PDP expelled Araraume, and withdrew support for his campaign. The PDP's divisive politics could tilt the odds in favor of APGA candidate Martin Agbaso. There is strong popular sentiment toward APGA, and Agbaso is well-financed and prepared.

SE Anambra Gubernatorial Race: PDP's
Uba Almost the Only One Left Standing

¶11. (C) Because of his presidential backing, PDP candidate and Special Presidential Advisor Andy Uba is the favorite. Uba, who engineered Maurice Iwu's appointment as INEC Chairman, has been helped by INEC decisions to disqualify his main rivals, APGA Governor Peter Obi, AC candidate and former Governor Chris Ngige, and ANPP candidate Nicholas Ukachukwu. All three candidates are seeking redress in the courts.

SS Delta Gubernatorial Race: PDP's Uduaghan Favored

¶12. (C) While Emmanuel Uduaghan is supported by the PDP machinery in Delta State, his popularity within groups, such as his own Itsekiri ethnic group, is uncertain. Many prominent Ijaw leaders oppose him as well. Uduaghan's

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greatest asset is Governor James Ibori, his cousin. An accomplished electioneer, Ibori will go all out to insure his relative's victory. In Delta State, it seems that blood may be thicker than unpopularity. The AC, the main opposition party in Delta, has split over Peter Okocha, its flag bearer. Several AC leaders now prefer Charles Obule, Okocha's running mate, who is an ethnic Urhobo, the dominant group in the State. Chief Great Ogboru, recently announced as the Democratic People's Party (DPP) candidate and supported by Chief Edwin Clark, the most prominent Ijaw leader, could challenge the PDP because Osboro has significant name recognition and some grass roots following.

SS Edo Gubernatorial Race: Tight Election

¶13. (C) The AC's candidate and former President of the Nigerian Labor Congress, Adams Oshiomhole, should give the PDP's candidate, Senator Oserheimen Osunbor, a tough fight. This is likely the most hotly contested election in the South-South. Because of his position in the labor movement, Oshiomhole has great name recognition and popularity. He is widely and favorably referred to as simply "Adams". Oshiomhole also is endorsed by the other opposition parties in Edo and benefits from internal division within the state PDP. A power struggle between Tony Anenih, Chairman of the PDP Board of Trustees, and the powerful Igbinedion family resulted in Osunbor's nomination as a compromise candidate. General dissatisfaction with PDP Governor Lucky Igbinedion's eight-year tenure serves to further complicate this interesting race for the PDP. Intrigue also plays its part. Some sources report the Igbinedions may be surreptitiously supporting Oshiomhole.

Yar'Adua Expected to Ride the PDP to Victory in the South

¶14. (C) PDP presidential candidate Umaru Yar'Adua will likely win most southern states. Yar'Adua inspires little passion, but he will rely on the PDP machinery to carry the region. The PDP machinery built around the sitting governors. Then, to the extent that any of the governors, surely Rivers State Governor Peter Odili, feels aggrieved by the way he was blocked from seeking the PDP nomination, is the extent that Yar'Adua's chances are wounded. Conversely, Yar'Adua's main rival, All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) candidate Muhammadu Buhari, lacks the party grassroots to contest effectively in the South. The ANPP, while it has some competitive gubernatorial candidates, is not favored to win any southern governorships. Action Congress (AC) candidate Atiku Abubakar, if he gets on the ballot, has significantly better support than Buhari but cannot match the PDP machine.

¶15. (C) The PDP machinery will help to manipulate results in its favor. While the major cities will likely have some semblance of an election, the conduct of the election in the

villages and hamlets will be even more deficient. These elections will be managed by a handful of officials who will determine the results. Again, the PDP, using the party structure, Nigerian Police Force, and government resources, has the nationwide structure to give it the advantage.

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Southwest Presidential Race: Yar'Adua Favored

¶16. (C) Yar'Adua is the favorite to win the six states of the Southwest. Atiku, if allowed to run, is Yar'Adua's closest competitor, and would possibly take Lagos. Atiku has gained sympathy for his battles to get himself on the ballot and his numerous court victories. Atiku is also generally seen as a better campaigner than either Yar'Adua or Buhari. The LP has agreed to support Atiku.

¶17. (C) Buhari runs well behind his top rivals in the Southwest. Buhari has a poor image based on memories of his previous rule, when he harassed prominent Yoruba leaders such as the revered Obafemi Awolowo. The Afenifere endorsement will help Buhari, but it will likely not be enough to carry any southwest state. However, this support, in addition to the support of some strong southern ANPP gubernatorial candidates, could be enough to help Buhari reach the 25 percent threshold in a couple of states. If Atiku remains disqualified, his votes will likely be split between Yar'Adua and Buhari, with Yar'Adua expected to gain more votes than Buhari. With so much attention on the gubernatorial elections in the Southwest, the presidential race gets relatively little attention, particularly since there are no Yoruba politicians on any major ticket.

Southeast Presidential Race: Yar'Adua Favored

¶18. (C) Yar'Adua is favored to win the Southeast. Atiku has gained favor in the Southeast from his battles with Obasanjo, and he could threaten Yar'Adua or even win a couple of states if allowed to run. Buhari lacks the organization and the ANPP is weak in the Southeast. Buhari could win 25 percent of the vote in two of the states which have strong ANPP gubernatorial candidates, though even this could still be difficult. Both Atiku and Buhari have Igbo running mates. APGA candidate Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu lights the Igbo flame, but is 73 years old and rumored to be in poor health. INEC and the Presidency are attempting to create factional differences within APGA, but factional leader Chekwas Okorie has little support or appeal in the region. PPA candidate Governor Orji Kalu has appeal to some Igbo youth, especially males, and is trying to benefit from Ojukwu's weakness to make a strong showing in the Southeast. Professor Pat Utomi of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) is Igbo and also seeks votes, but he has not gained strong support.

South-South Presidential Race: Yar'Adua Favored

¶19. (C) The South-South is a PDP stronghold and as such, a ticket with Bayelsa Governor Goodluck Jonathan as Vice-President is expected to win these six states. If he can make the ballot, Atiku has some support, but except for Edo State, the AC lacks strong gubernatorial candidates or organization in the region. The South-South is Buhari's weakest region. While he has been recognized as "the only honest candidate" by some in the south, he has done little campaigning and the weakness of the ANPP in the region makes

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it no match for the PDP. Utomi and Kalu both have ties to the South-South and have made efforts to reach out to the region, but remain marginal players. PDP governors will play a significant role in who wins each state. Governor Odili, Akwa Ibom Governor Victor Attah, and Cross-River Governor Donald Duke were coarsely dissuaded to drop their presidential ambitions. They all are still hurting. Should any one of the three act on this hurt, the PDP could lose the state. In Delta, Governor Ibori has been a major bankroller of Yar'Adua and is likely to deliver that State. Ibori's reason is not so much affinity for Yar'Adua but his desire to see the end of the Obasanjo era.

Comment

¶20. (C) In southern Nigerian politics, organization is important but most important of all is the power of sitting governors to control the process. PDP governors control 14 of the 17 states in the South, and sitting governors are expected to use the levers of local power to manipulate and steer results in the party's favor. Electoral violence is likely to occur in some states with tight gubernatorial elections. Violence is less likely to occur for the presidential election, as southern Nigerians are unlikely to protest a disputed presidential candidate due to the fact the major candidates are northerners. End comment.

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